

TESTIMONY to be read by the
Program Review and Investigations Committee
(emailed testimony to: pri@cga.ct.gov)

**Testimony of Karen Zaorski in Support of RHB 6854, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND
INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE REPORTING OF CERTAIN DATA
BY MANAGED CARE COMPANIES AND HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANIES TO THE
INSURANCE DEPARTMENT**

Sen. Fonfara, Rep. Carpino and members of the committee, my name is Karen Zaorski and I am a board member of Wolcott Crossroads Inc of Wolcott, CT. Along with many other concerned CT residents and industry professionals, I testified in favor of the committee's 2014 bills to assist individuals and families with public and private insurance who were unable to obtain help for adolescents and young adults with mental health and substance abuse disorders. In light of the great need and overwhelming bi-partisan support, I was disturbed with last year's veto of the bill to track denials of care. This proposed legislation which was just a first step towards ensuring that barriers to treatment are removed for our young people. According to the bill's sponsors, a last minute change in the bill shifted the reporting requirement from insurance companies to Access Connecticut. Access Connecticut felt they could not handle the requirement and the bill was vetoed. It is my understanding that the parties have agreed to meet with legislative sponsors to set up a reporting method that will be acceptable. The timing for addressing this issue is of utmost importance as there are way too many young people who still remain unable to access treatment for the chronic relapsing disease of addiction. CT statistics clearly show an increase with overdose deaths each year and on a weekly basis I am hearing from individuals and families that the barriers to treatment still exist in spite of federal parity legislation.

Families and insurance regulators need to know which insurance companies are issuing denials for mental health and substance abuse treatment so this practice can be changed. Securing treatment for these illnesses is beyond the ability of parents who are already overwhelmed with caring for a young person facing addiction or mental health problems. I am talking about saving lives so I implore you to do all in your power to please help these individuals and their families by supporting RHB 6854.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Most sincerely,

Karen Zaorski

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